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**TESTIMONY OF SENATOR MARK MONTIGNY TO ATTORNEY GENERAL  
MARTHA COAKLEY**

**HEARING ON THE ISSUE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND THE INTERNET**

**OCTOBER 19, 2010**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for convening this hearing on the issue of sexual exploitation of individuals on Internet Online services. I also want to commend you for your actions in bringing to light the use of web based markets and social networks in luring innocent and vulnerable individuals, mostly women and children, into the world of prostitution and other areas of the sex trade.

I also want to commend those who testified at the hearing, especially the victims of sexual exploration who bravely told their individual tales of horror on how they were lured into this lifestyle and how they were the lucky ones who were able escape and regain their lives. I also commend the members of the law enforcement who proposed tougher regulations and initiatives such as 'safe harbor' legislation that will treat minors enticed into this lifestyle as victims, not as offenders.

While this is important that we deal with the issues of Internet exploitation and related issues, it is of vital concern that we address the “root evil” of all these actions, that is, the horrendous crime of human trafficking. The trafficking of human beings is modern day slavery. While the victims do not wear chains they are nevertheless bound into involuntary servitude. It involves the illegal trade in human beings for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. Human trafficking involves servitude to pay off debts, forced labor, child labor and sexual exploitation of children and adults. It is a worldwide problem; over 27 million people in the world are victims of this form of slavery. The U.S. government estimates 700,000 to 2 million women and children in the United States are victims. The Federal government can only give estimates because so many victims do not come forward or are deemed criminals. While the Federal Government has passed legislation targeting the despicable individuals who force victims into slavery and profit from the victims pain, efforts have to be made on the state level to combat this crime.

For several legislative sessions I have led the fight to bring to light this crime and to pass legislation outlawing the various aspects of human trafficking. In this session, I was successful in getting a bill to the floor of the Senate and with a unanimous vote of the Senate the bill has been enacted. Senate 2589, *An Act Relating to Anti-Human Trafficking and Protection*, is currently in the House Ways and Means Committee. This legislation has been carefully constructed and vetted over the past three sessions by human rights advocates, legal and law enforcement officials. S.2589 makes human trafficking a criminal offense, establishes a trust fund for the victims, makes appropriate services available to child victims, and creates an anti-human trafficking commission to oversee the indefinite assistance of victims.

More than 30 states have now passed similar laws. Massachusetts continues to lag further behind the rest of the nation with each passing day. Failure to take legislative action on the state level leaves a very vulnerable population at risk to be victimized for profit and sexual exploitation. This is inexcusable. As I have said numerous times before, human trafficking is not just a crime against the individual; it is a crime against humanity. We cannot let one more day pass. The time for action is now.

As we look at ways to prevent vulnerable individuals from being victimized and exploited, we need to pass S. 2589 so that we can strike at those who would profit by destroying the lives of others. We must pass the anti-human trafficking legislation that is currently pending in the House of Representatives before the end of the year.